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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on the educational implications of Mexican immigration resulting from the North American Free Trade Agreement. Informed debate and the effectiveness of educational initiatives depend upon an understanding of the issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives. At present, neither efficient systems nor effective structures are in place to handle the complicated educational issues that are emerging. To be successful, all efforts must recognize and consider three realities: the continuing migration of families and students into the United States in search of a better life; the educational background of Mexican immigrant children; and the rapidly evolving economy, society, and culture of border areas. This report presents a brief history of the Mexican educational system, including efforts at reform. Existing and emerging cross-border education agenda are summarized, including bilingual education and the shortage of bilingual teachers, curriculum alignment and credentialing, distance education technology, cultural exchange and understanding, social and health services, and special education. It outlines some of the current efforts to deal with these issues by federal and state governments, higher educational institutions, businesses, and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. The report concludes that border issues will eventually affect much of both countries and that solutions will require drawing upon the strengths of each. (RAH)

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SCHOOLS along the BORDER

education in the age of NAFTA

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Council for Educational Development and Research
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
United States Coalition for Education for All

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Preface

Schools Along the Border: Education in the Age of NAFTA looks at a subject that has inspired controversy and impassioned public debate for decades — the effects of immigration on education along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.

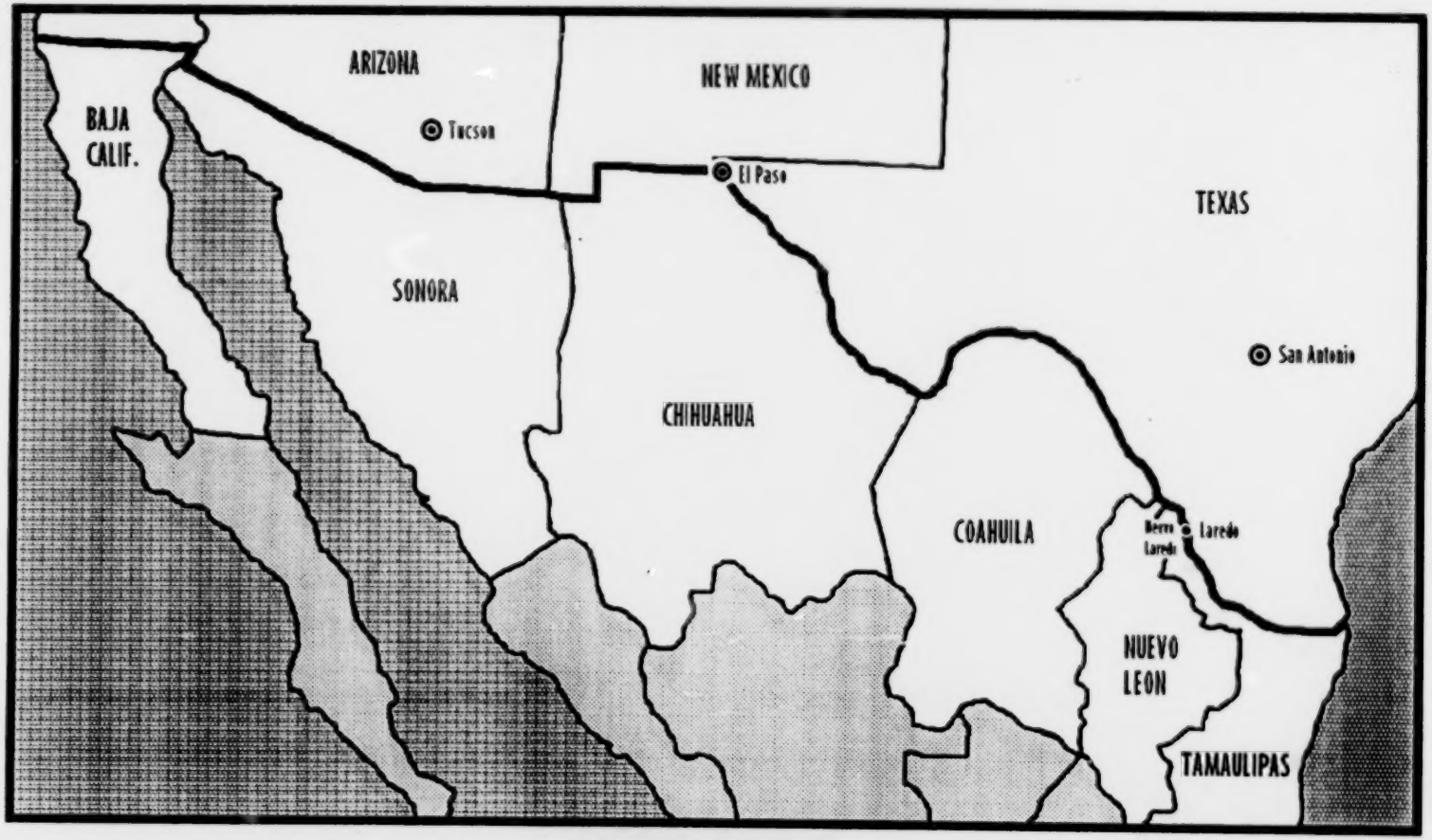
Its publication, as part of the Council for Educational Development and Research's *EdTalk* series, is intended to inform policymakers and educators about this nationally significant topic in education. And, education along *la frontera*, as the swath of land along the U.S.-Mexico border is called, is an issue of *national* significance. It is important to everyone because from the border, many of these new immigrants move on to Chicago, New York, Denver, Seattle, and other cities and towns across the United States. Their migrations have an impact on schools everywhere.

Several organizations collaborated to make this publication possible. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), one of the regional educational laboratories among the Council's membership, was a natural partner because of its activities on behalf of schools along the U.S.-Mexico border. SEDL has just completed a major review of the conditions and issues of education along the border region and is holding discussions with and facilitating understanding among officials on both sides. Much of the content of this *EdTalk*, in fact, draws from SEDL's interviews and explorations. Similarly, the U.S. Coalition for Education for All, a coalition of organizations focused on international issues in education, provides insight from its consideration of issues that the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement raises for schools, not only in the U.S. and Mexico but in Canada as well.

Funding for this report came from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, through the regional educational laboratories.

We hope to inform the debate. Understanding the issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives is necessary if we are to raise the quality of life for persons on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Among the collaborators in this project, SEDL in particular welcomes inquiries about its service to schools in the border region.



The U.S.-Mexico Border

This is not the final camera-ready copy!

Introduction

"Between neighbors such as ourselves, the friendly dialogue is an obligation and an historical imperative."

— Senator Antonio Riva Palcio Lopez as President of the Mexican Senate

Almost none of the debate that saturated the airwaves before passage of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) focused on how NAFTA's economic agreements might affect schools. Indeed, NAFTA contains no educational provisions. Yet, educators in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico agree that NAFTA *will* have an impact on education in all three nations. The reason is clear. Free trade begets free movement as people follow jobs, some to work in other countries, others to crossing points along the border. And as these people move, they take their children with them.

The fact that NAFTA contains no educational provisions is, of course, no barrier to developing educational programs in its wake. In this, there are lessons in the experience of the European Union (EU). The EU's founding treaties contained no educational provisions either, but as the issue crept onto its agenda, the EU found itself developing a wide variety of educational programs. EU programs rely on education and training to facilitate the free movement of labor and to even out the economic disparities between EU members. They foster the notion of a "European consciousness" while maintaining respect for language diversity; promote and facilitate mobility for students and teachers, exchanges for students and faculty, and international links among institutions; and facilitate reciprocal agreements on professional qualifications and the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas. EU members have demonstrated that typically two-thirds of a country's contribution to education and training within the EU gets recycled back into that country. This is in addition to the indirect benefits that derive from such programs. Thus, political support for cooperation in educational matters has been high.

Free trade begets free movement as people follow jobs, some to work in other countries, others to crossing points along the border.

Like the EU treaty, NAFTA has an impact on education programs in all three countries that are party to it. However, because migration between the U.S. and Canada is generally moderate and marked by relative tolerance, and because the issues relating to the southern U.S. border are by far more complicated and controversial, this *EdTalk* focuses on movement across the Mexican-U.S. border.

Public opinion about immigration and free trade in North America ranges from demands for immigration blockades and "English only" laws on the one hand to support for an "integrated borderland" in which multiculturalism and bilingualism flourish on the other. Proponents of the former explain that restricting new immigration to the U.S. will preserve jobs, reduce the costs of welfare and social services, and preserve "U.S." culture, language, and heritage. Many Mexican officials support restrictions on U.S. immigration, viewing the emigration of Mexican citizens as contrary to their national interests and preferring the exportation of goods rather than labor.

Supporters of the latter "open border" view prefer that labor be allowed to flow back and forth across the U.S.-Mexico border without restriction. They would like strict nationalism to give way to a more international perspective and to a way of life that will benefit the U.S. in the future, just as the skills, talents, and insights of its immigrants has benefited the U.S. throughout its history.

Educators, both American and Mexican, are addressing these implications, especially in border areas where the realities of immigration have preceded policies. In higher education, work is underway for a North American Studies Program; colleges and universities are considering reciprocity for credits and credentials; and public agencies and non-profit organizations are gearing up for exchange programs for students and teachers. Yet these efforts remain *ad hoc*. Neither efficient systems nor effective structures are in place to handle the complicated educational issues that are emerging.

. . . children and families from Mexico and the U.S. have, do, and will continue to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in search of a better life.

At least three truths evolved early in this investigation. They became so obvious and recurrent in the search for information and perspective that they quickly became givens. First, is the reality of immigration. No matter what actions governments take to restrict the flow of students and families from Mexico into the U.S., or vice versa, and no matter what becomes of NAFTA or any subsequent free trade agreements, children and families from Mexico and the U.S. have, do, and will continue to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in search of a better life. Paired border communities in

the U.S. and Mexico experience 255 million individual passages annually as people go about the business of living. As former Ysleta, Texas, school superintendent Mauro Reyna put it, "Most of the educators along the border feel immigration is a given. As the Rio Grande flows, so flows population growth ... At this point, we're more concerned about making the most of it, since there's no real way to stop it."

A second truth, conspicuously absent from most reports on immigrant education, is that many children and families who cross the border do not enter U.S. communities and schools as empty vessels. Many have begun or have completed some schooling in Mexico or in some other south or central American country. Thus, to plan reform agendas, or to otherwise address "best" strategies for educating Hispanic immigrant children without first understanding the educational backgrounds from which these students come is foolhardy. Yet U.S. educators along the border and across the nation have, on the whole, little understanding of Mexico's education history, structure, and present reform efforts. Joint planning from the start, so that everyone can buy into the process, is the only way to develop sustainable education programs, policies, and systems.

Because Mexican immigrants are particularly mobile, often coming to border communities and then moving on to large urban areas like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, their impact is ultimately felt across the entire nation.

Third, the border itself is dynamic, with personalities as varied and similar as the communities that comprise it. The U.S.-Mexico border is the most populated international border in the world. It is home to more than 16.5 million people. El Paso/Ciudad Juarez, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, McAllen/Reynosa — each of the twin cities straddling the border relies upon the other for present and future survival. The border economy, society, and culture is evolving so rapidly that it could well render obsolete the most carefully crafted approach to coordinating education between the U.S. and Mexico before it can be implemented. Since few rules apply, better understanding and more knowledge are essential.

This *EdTalk* takes a closer look at the major immigration issues in education and the impact immigration has on schools along the border and in interior sections of the U.S. Because Mexican immigrants are particularly mobile, often coming to border communities and then moving on to large urban areas like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, their influence is ultimately felt across the entire nation. This publication also explores some key educational issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives. In doing so, it summarizes existing and emerging

cross-border education agenda, including bilingual education, the shortage of bilingual teachers, curriculum alignment and credentialing, telecommunications, cultural exchange and understanding, and social and health services. This *EdTalk* closes with some a look at some current efforts at coordinating regional work by governments, educational institutions, and businesses. An understanding of the issues promotes effective efforts to resolve a major educational challenge of our time.

Issues of Immigration and Migration

"No matter how high you build the fence at the border, the immigrant will learn to jump higher."

— from the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
"U.S. Immigration Reform: The Voice from Across the Border"

These are the facts ...

- Twenty-five percent of all immigrants in the U.S. live in California, and of them, more than a quarter live in Los Angeles County and are of Mexican, Central American, and/or South American origin.

- In Texas, school enrollment is rising over 16 percent per year along the border — double the statewide average. One out of every four new students in Texas was born in Mexico or is of Mexican heritage.

- Tens of thousands of people cross the border every day, moving back and forth between homes in Mexico and jobs, even schools, in the U.S.

- The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Plyler vs. Doe*, ruled that school districts must educate students regardless of whether they reside in the U.S. legally.

- Immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border has flowed steadily and essentially uninterrupted for nearly 200 years. Until the early decades of this century, U.S. authorities paid it little attention.

Perhaps this is the worst of times to broach discussions of education attainment and equity along the border. According to border scholar Jorge Bustamante, "It's impossible to speak rationally about education along the border now because people refer to a debate that's based on emotions and myths rather than facts." Still, we must try.

The Myths and the Facts

Many U.S. residents remain ever alarmed at the steady flow of immigration across this country's southern border. The complaint is usually the same: Immigrants take from the U.S. without contributing their fair share to U.S. resources. A *USA Today* poll in the summer of 1994 revealed that 65 percent of U.S. adults favor reducing immigration, the highest percentage since World War II. In November 1994, the citizens of California overwhelmingly endorsed Proposition 187 in an attempt to cut off undocumented immigrants from state services, including education.

The reality is different. Immigrants do contribute — and contribute substantially — to federal, state, and local tax bases as consumers of products and services. According to the U.S. Senate's Office of Research, foreign-born immigrants who arrived in the U.S. between 1980 and 1990 are no more likely to rely on public assistance than native-born U.S. residents. In addition, because the newcomers are younger, fewer draw social security.

Moreover, surveys suggest that most Mexican immigrants wish to return to their home communities once they've earned enough money abroad to gain economic independence and a modicum of hope for the future. One Mexican senator explains, "Immigrants will put forth their greatest efforts and leave the best parts of themselves in the U.S."

...recessions in the U.S. economy historically inspire restrictive immigration policies.

Why these different perceptions? Bustamante explains that recessions in the U.S. economy historically inspire restrictive immigration policies. "Recession is accompanied by unemployment that creates the exorbitant xenophobia among sections of the population. The emerging sentiments are taken advantage of by politicians who use the calamity to make scapegoats of immigrants who are blamed for budgetary crises and crime. The public then demands that these politicians do something about the immigrant 'problem.'"

The economy eventually recovers and things get back to normal. The U.S. again needs workers to pick crops and to do low-skill work in service industries and other poor-paying jobs. The nation welcomes immigrants — until the next recession when the whole scenario repeats itself.

The National Council of La Raza, among others, appears to agree. It claims that the heart of the immigration paradox is rooted in U.S. immigration policy. Over the

years, legislation has made Mexican immigrants both beneficiaries and victims. The intent of the 1986 Immigration Act, for instance, was to legalize an estimated three million immigrants living in the U.S. and thereby curb the exploitation of an underground underclass. However, according to La Raza, the effort failed, first in method and second in effect. While the legislation benefited individuals, it did not stabilize the status of family members who continued to risk deportation. Further, requiring employers to prevent undocumented workers from entering the legitimate job market only increased an already thriving counterfeit document market, which in turn contributed to increasing discrimination against resident and foreign-born Latinos. A General Accounting Office study reports that nationally, 19 percent of employers admitted to adopting discriminatory hiring practices in hopes of "protecting themselves" against the sanctions of the law.

. . . immigrants in Texas have become the focus of the state's fiscal woes.

Adding credence to Bustamante's view of the situation is the fact that immigrants in Texas have become the focus of the state's fiscal woes. The Governor's office claimed that immigrants cost the state $166 million annually for education, health, and social services, and sued the federal government to recoup the funds.

President Clinton, who had proposed reducing the number of border patrol agents in 1994, later reversed his plan and asked Congress to appropriate $172.5 million to hire 600 new Immigration and Naturalization Service agents in order to curb illegal immigration across U.S. borders that, he noted, "leak like a sieve." Although, to be fair, the switch in the Administration's position was influenced by public outcry in reaction to two ships of Chinese immigrants intercepted off the U.S. coast, and the illegal immigration of the mastermind behind the World Trade Center bombing.

In addition, a growing fear among U.S. residents — many of them first and second-generation immigrants themselves — fueled the new resolve that immigration was placing the nation under siege. For example, 65 percent of Hispanics in an extensive Latino National Political Survey said that too many immigrants are entering the U.S. — ostensibly, explains *Dallas Morning News* columnist Richard Estrada, because "Hispanics know that massive, impoverished immigration is not benefiting the country." Academicians also expressed opposition. In the *Phi Delta Kappan*, David Stewart wrote: "A reduced level of immigration would be desirable ... More aggressive (though humane) action to control the increasing inflow of illegal immigrants would also be appropriate."

However, immigration, legal and illegal, appears inevitable for the foreseeable future. Observers predict that the current monetary crisis in Mexico, in which U.S. help was required to stabilize the collapsing peso, will not be over soon. Coupled with that, Mexico is experiencing the fourth largest population growth rate in the world. Along with its high birth rate, life expectancy is increasing (from 41.5 years in the 1940s to 63 years in the 1980s). Immigration from first the poor, rural countryside to jobs in border cities and then across the border in search of a future that promises more than simple survival seems a logical, natural progression.

All this means that the U.S. must pay attention to indicators, research, and the borne-out wisdom of experts who maintain that lines in the dirt do not impede the aspirations of people in search of a living. Border educators contend that Mexican students will continue to cross the border to attend U.S. schools — whether they have to sneak across at the risk of being detained in border patrol offices, or drive boldly across each morning in cars with Mexican license plates to the school bus stops.

History and Reform of the Mexican Education System

"Neither [the American or Mexican education] system is good or bad — each is simply different."

— Jorge Bustamante, President of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, Mexico

At first glance, recent Mexican educational reforms seem little more than replicas of reforms in the U.S. For example, a recent Mexican law lengthens the school year from 180 to 200 days and extends compulsory education through the ninth grade. In addition, the law provides for parent-teacher organizations in each school designed, in part, to stem the power of the teacher union. The Administration has further proposed to decentralize federal teacher contract negotiations to state and local educational levels and to raise teacher salaries by some 20 percent. In light of the history, traditions, and structure of Mexico's education system, however, notions like site-based or localized decision making — and the newest cries for restructuring and systemic reform — may face significant challenges. To understand the context of educational reform in Mexico, we must first understand the history of modern-day Mexican education.

The First Period: 1917 to 1940

The Constitution of 1917 was a written promise to amend past injustices — specifically the corruption and oppression of past regimes — and to promote a strong sense of Mexican nationalism. The post-revolutionary Mexican educational system was a key element in this effort. The purpose of Mexican education was to promote social equality, increase human capacity for economic development, and achieve political stability.

In 1920, the Secretary of Public Education, José Vasconcelos, successfully institutionalized compulsory primary education. Vasconcelos also greatly influenced the development of secondary education, though this was not compulsory. He

combined the traditional commercial and vocational schools with newer schools emphasizing classical European education and created the *preparatoria*, or high school, which responded to a variety of student intellectual capacities and socioeconomic needs. Other early notable achievements in education included the development of literacy programs for people of all ages; an increased number of schools, students, and teachers, particularly in rural areas; and meal and health programs for schoolchildren.

Then, beginning in 1924, under the presidency of Plutarco Elías Calles, the government reduced the education budget to pacify the army. It reshaped secondary education into a general curriculum followed by two-year specialized curricula for students planning to attend the university.

From 1934 to 1940, under President Lázaro Cárdenas, education took a socialist turn that more closely resembled the 1917 model. Investment in education increased, averaging 16 percent of the total government budget. The government built more schools and public libraries, and developed more literacy programs. Cárdenas was also instrumental in creating a system of polytechnic institutions that became a central training ground for adult workers. Teachers in the 1930s enjoyed a high level of professionalism in which they strove to improve teaching methods and materials.

The Second Period: 1940 to the 1970s

The role of education as a contributor in developing human capital for the well being of the individual and the state — in that order — shifted under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* or PRI) in the 1940s. Its new function was to supply the means for the PRI to stay in power. Or, to put it another way, education became a form of political capital to promote political stability. Even though the education system under the PRI continually expanded, it did not keep up with the demands of a growing population and the production sector. Because more people entered the labor market than the economy could absorb, unemployment rose. Fewer students were able to complete their basic education because they were too poor to attend school.

The Mexican state responded with two separate plans to expand the education system, but again, neither held sufficient regard for the national economy. Education policy in this period did succeed in promoting nationalism as a reason for reforming education, however. And for the sake of nationalism, education became further centralized. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the central government in Mexico City

developed a uniform and mandatory national curriculum and textbooks for the nation's schools. Teachers had little latitude to incorporate individual or regional interests into their curriculum content.

Mexican Education Today

Funding. The Mexican government provides a free public system of education for all students. According to the United Nations, the number of students attending Mexican public schools has grown by 300 percent in the last 10 years. To support such growth, the government has increased its education budget by 70 percent. However, families with greater resources often choose to send their children to private schools. Private schools remain small and well funded. Further, although less than 10 percent of students go to college, and half leave before completing a degree, public universities consume a third of the federal education budget. They too, are free.

The problem with textbooks illustrates the disparity between poor and wealthy students. Although experts such as Carlos Alberto Torres, Professor of Education at the University of California in Los Angeles, note that texts are supposed to be provided free to *primaria* — elementary — students, there is a real problem in obtaining a sufficient supply to meet growing student populations, especially in border communities.

At the *secundaria* level — comparable to middle and high-school in the U.S. — and beyond, students must buy their own textbooks. This exacerbates differences between poor students and wealthy students. One teacher from Nuevo Laredo, a border city across from Laredo, Texas, reported, "In my school, we needed textbooks in history and geography, specifically a recent popular edition in history. We needed to find a way to seek funding to obtain these texts. Whereas in the private schools, the kids can probably have the books in hand the next day, in the public schools, it may take a week for some children to get a hold of the textbook. If we are lucky, half the kids may have the textbook in a few weeks. For the other half, we have to go out and buy the books out of our own pockets since we are not allowed to make loans to the students."

...there is a real problem in obtaining a sufficient supply to meet growing student populations, especially in border communities.

Decentralization. According to change expert Shirley Hord of SEDL, "Where there are systemic structures that are centralized, the national shift and emphasis moves

toward decentralization. Where the structures are decentralized, the change is toward centralization." Although Mexico has a recent history of centralization, it is moving toward decentralization.

Throughout Mexico, but along the border in particular, the federal government is relinquishing some policymaking power to state and local education officials. Part of the reason for this is that in order to achieve its economic agenda, the government has to become less top-heavy. But, decentralization makes good educational sense as well.

One teacher in Nuevo Laredo, noted: "The [education] programs that were in effect a few years ago were very structured. Teachers were given step-by-step instructions to reach the prescribed objective, and evaluations were based on how well the teachers followed these instructions. The worry among the teachers was that creativity was stifled; the program was too limiting ... With the recent modernization of the education system, the teacher is given complete responsibility for the teaching process. Now, the teacher is responsible for structuring, planning, and determining what to do and how to do it," she explains, adding that good teachers had always done this "in one way or another."

...the central states have not decentralized in ways that the heavily U.S.-influenced border has.

Despite such reforms, however, most education in Mexico remains centralized and conservative. Susan Rippberger of Youngstown State University's Foundation of Education surveyed teachers in Mexico's central and southern states and in Mexico City. It became clear to her that the central states have not decentralized in ways that the heavily U.S.-influenced border has. Rippberger's interviewees were more controlling and strict with their students than were border teachers. Also, they tended not to participate in inservice sessions. For example, although teachers reported that the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) regularly offers inservice in educational psychology, pedagogy, materials development, and other topics, the sessions are often "canceled for lack of interest or participation."

Teachers' Union. The teachers' union is powerful in Mexico. For example, in 1989, many teachers went on strike to increase their wages and regain some of the professional stature that they had lost after the devaluation of the peso in the 1980s. The union, the Sindicato Nacional Trabajadores de Educación — commonly known as the SNTE — ousted its leader and won concessions having to do with term limits on union leaders and increased funding opportunities for professional development. In

December of 1993, after learning that new laws would cut pensions and delay retirements, 13 teachers went on a hunger strike, which led to a further strike of 30,000 teachers in Monterrey.

Teacher Preparation. Until recently, teachers in Mexico typically attended teacher preparation schools called *Normales*. They did not need baccalaureate degrees to teach. A degree from *Escuela Normal* roughly translates into upper-secondary or pre-university training, while a degree from *Escuela Superior* is usually comparable to a university-level or a baccalaureate degree. Then, a number of influences combined to strengthen teacher training in Mexico, including at least one national decentralization decree, modernization within universities themselves, and the Mexican teacher union's insistence on enhancing teacher professionalization. As a result, the Mexican government upgraded teacher licensing requirements to include a bachelor's degree and university pedagogical training.

But educators in border communities such as Nuevo Laredo still echo their counterparts across the Rio Grande when they discuss persistent problems with their training. "What I have found to be a problem with the education of the teacher," observed one thoughtful educator, "is that the plan of study doesn't necessarily correspond to the reality found in the classroom. Some of us have noted this and have talked about approaching the normal schools to incorporate the experiences of the teachers' inservice for the benefit of current students enrolled in the normal schools. Perhaps they can experiment with some of our ideas about what should or shouldn't be part of the education of the teacher."

...concerns include an overabundance of trained teachers in some border communities and too few in the country's interior.

Other concerns include an overabundance of trained teachers in some border communities and too few in the country's interior. The difference between urban areas, such as Nuevo Laredo, which are thought modern by Mexican standards, and rural areas is considerable. "Our normal schools have been acclaimed for many years for their excellence in teacher training, but for urban schools, not for rural teaching assignments," says one teacher who trains urban graduates to teach in rural areas.

Another problem, one that mirrors the concerns of teachers in the U.S., is the lack of follow-up and continuity in reform programs. As in teacher reform and efficacy-building attempts the world over, when change is not immediate, reformers often mandate that schools try yet another innovation. "We have 40 hours or more worth

of courses that are offered to the teachers on various topics," reported a Mexican teacher, "but, again, there is very little follow-up and little sense of permanence."

Bilingual Education and the Indigenous Population. Mexico's indigenous Indian population represents approximately 10 percent of all its inhabitants. This population speaks at least nine different languages. Understandably then, some 17,000 teachers and half a million Indian children participate in Mexico's national program of bilingual education.

In a report on public education in Mexico, Nancy Modiano notes that Mexico has repeatedly made small-scale attempts to help native populations retain their culture and language since the 1930s. The lessons learned contributed to successful efforts in Chiapas in the 1950s, when the National Indian Institute approached the teaching of literacy by first teaching Indians in their mother tongue.

Modiano also reports on the recent efforts of Mexico's Office of Indian Education. Not only does the office require that classroom bilingual teachers speak at least one Indian language in addition to Spanish, but also, in 1986, the Office began training bilingual education teachers.

More recently, a new law requires that educators adapt basic education plans and programs to the linguistic and cultural characteristics of each indigenous group. Consequently, at a bi-national conference on bilingual education in Mexico, held in November, 1994, the need to train more bilingual teachers and to develop instructional materials in indigenous languages featured prominently in the discussion.

Special Education. Unlike in the U.S. where, to the extent possible, regular classrooms take in students with disabilities, in Mexico, public schools are not expected to serve children with disabilities. Other public agencies typically carry out this function for those children who do not attend private school. Many students who need special education services do not receive them at all.

"Parents of children with disabilities traditionally either paid for them to attend private schools, or simply kept the children at home," explains Mexican educational consultant Margarita Ramos.

Yet some special educators and special students in Mexico are more optimistic today than they have been in years. Thanks to the recent advocacy of a number of civic activists in the state of Nuevo Leon, and the new national reform climate, students

with disabilities are steadily making their way into the mainstream of Mexican education. The state recently passed what it calls the "Integration Law," which protects the rights of people with disabilities.

The state of Mexican education today affects schools on both sides of the border, as does the educational reform movement in the U.S. For instance, the dichotomy between the more conservative central and southern regions of Mexico and the more progressive border regions could affect how active or passive students are and believe they should be in the classroom. This is a consideration for schools in the U.S. that are encouraging students to become more active learners. Similarly, students from Mexico's rural areas are likely to have had quite different learning experiences than those in urban Mexico. Mexico's plentiful experience with Spanish-Indian bilingual education can be an asset to the U.S. as it trains bilingual teachers to work with both Spanish-speaking and indigenous-language populations. And, while most Indians live in the southern Mexican states, some will reach the border, requiring American teachers to communicate with Mexican students who speak neither English nor Spanish well.

Education Issues Along The Border

"Mexicans have been fairly self-sufficient in their educational reforms, and this inward-looking preference may continue to play a role — even though Mexican officials are now looking to world politics and economics for solutions."

— Carolos Alberto Torres, Assistant Dean, School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles

NAFTA is sure to create more immigration, new labor needs and workplace demands, and a new set of educational imperatives. Free trade is likely to spur not only teaching Spanish-speaking students English, but also teaching monolingual English speakers Spanish. However, with international companies moving into the border region, there is a need for multiple languages as well, including Japanese, German, and Korean.

Educators in border communities generally identify the need for bilingual education and well-prepared bilingual teachers as a major issue on their educational agenda.

Exponential population growth has already stretched school facilities and budgets. As early as 1977, Texas Education Agency researchers said the need for additional school facilities was "severe." In one Texas district alone, 2,000 students come from Mexico every year, the equivalent of an entire elementary school. Property taxes in this district are already fully allocated. There are currently no additional state income tax sources to fund the construction of new buildings. In addition, educators and policymakers along the border are in dire need of current demographic and student data from the U.S. and Mexico to inform educational planning and policy.

Efforts to resolve some of these and other issues are ongoing among educators on both sides of the border. Educators in border communities generally identify the need for bilingual education and well-prepared bilingual teachers as a major issue

on their educational agenda. But they are grappling with other issues as well. These issues have to do with teacher credentialing, curriculum alignment and standards, telecommunications, cultural understanding and exchange programs between the U.S. and Mexico, and health and social services.

Bilingual Education

Instruction in bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs remains one of the most complex and multi-layered issues confronting education both on the border and inland. School districts in Arkansas, a state not directly on the border but where many Mexican immigrants go to work in the poultry industry, have experienced as much as a 50 percent increase in the need for ESL and bilingual education programs over the past five years. California officials report that in the Lennox School District, located near the Los Angeles airport, 92 percent of students speak a language other than English when they enter school. That language is usually Spanish. New York, Chicago, and other cities large and small — and far from the border — are wrestling with similar situations.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 25 million Americans — 12 percent of the nation's population — speak a language other than English at home, up from nine percent in 1979. Fifty-eight percent of these non-English speakers speak Spanish, and almost 25 percent of them are school-aged. Spanish is arguably the home language for far more students than educators can ignore. Bilingual education holds promise for these students. But bilingual programs contain many issues that need to be addressed.

Resistance to Learning and Speaking English. The reality of language along the border can be seen in communities such as Laredo, Texas. Spanish is the dominant language in all sectors of Laredo society except the school and the affluent neighborhoods. There is a widespread reluctance among native Spanish-speaking students to learn and use English.

In part, this is due to discrimination and prejudice against immigrants which, in turn, created resentment and resistance among the Spanish-speaking population. In addition, principal Juanita Zepeda of Juarez-Lincoln Elementary in El Cenizo, Texas, explains, "So much of our business community caters to Mexican nationals ... the Spanish language is necessary because it's a source of revenue and a source of

commerce. So the only English that students routinely hear is in the school. And even here, in the cafeteria, on the playground, and in the halls, everything is in Spanish."

Two-Way Bilingualism. Some experts suggest that schools adopt a program of "enrichment bilingualism" that respects both cultures and languages and treats bilingualism as desirable for both groups. Such is the idea behind two-way bilingual programs — programs that instruct in both the native language and the second language — in this case, Spanish and English. Schools that do not force a choice between Spanish and English can help Spanish-speaking students feel that there is respect for their language and culture. As José Armas of the "Amigos" collaborative effort in Cambridge, Massachusetts, puts it, "Parents as well as educators are now saying that bilingual education should not be a remedial program, but an enrichment program to create bilingual children."

Such two-way bilingualism has research on its side. Research consistently indicates that bilingualism is an intellectual asset as well as a practical one. For example, when a child learns two languages from birth, he or she recognizes that a word is little more than an arbitrary label attached within a changing but explicable world of meaning, operation, and usage.

Conversely, research points to the dangers of pushing students toward the second language too early. A study released by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages found that by the 12th grade, there was a wide achievement difference between students who had been educated in two-way bilingual classes and those in monolingual "pullout" programs that offered students little or no instruction in their native language after the sixth grade. Similarly, a study by Virginia Collier of George Mason University in Virginia found that upper-grade students who received only ESL instruction did not perform as well as students who received instruction in their native language while learning English.

. . . bilingualism is an intellectual asset as well as a practical one.

Researcher Alicia Sosa joins a chorus of bilingual education researchers who maintain that it takes from four to seven years to learn English, and schools should not rush students. These researchers have repeatedly shown that placing LEP students in English-only classrooms before they have sufficiently developed their native language skills delays the development of higher-order thinking skills and conceptual abilities in both languages. Sosa, Jim Cummins, and other researchers maintain

that students whose first language is not English ought to have the opportunity to develop conceptual skills in their first language and then to transfer them to English or any second language.

In poor families that have moved from Mexico's rural interior to the border, children often don't have the experience base in either language to do well initially in school. For that reason, research recommends that teachers focus on whatever language the child does bring to school — even if the child has no school experience in that language. From there, in a classroom, school, and community environment that respects all manner of communication, students can develop the necessary skills and transfer them to the next language.

Thus far, two-way bilingual programs are most prevalent in elementary schools. Expanding two-way bilingualism into middle and high schools has proven difficult. Bilingual educators blame the scarcity of bilingual teachers, poor bilingual texts, and the traditional use of class periods as significant deterrents. Of 171 schools in 100 school districts that used a two-way bilingual model last year, only two were high schools. In the end, a bi-national, free-market economy may provide the most effective impetus for bilingual education. Proficiency in Spanish and English is becoming an economic advantage, and even a necessity. A more open attitude toward language learning would promote both the development of new pedagogical approaches and new policies that reflect the social and economic realities of the future.

Instruction Techniques in Bilingual Classes. Citing a variety of studies, researcher Sosa outlines the attributes of a successful program targeted to helping Mexican-American students do well in school:

1) Effective bilingual teachers ask Mexican-American students to contribute their own "funds of knowledge" or cultural practices and perspectives to classroom topics.

2) Successful bilingual teachers not only teach their students to be aware of social rules and connotations in language, but also model and explain various language expressions.

3) Effective teachers strive to reduce the risk factors that contribute to disproportionately high drop-out rates among immigrants, over-representation in special education classes, under-representation in gifted and talented programs, and low teacher expectations for language minority students.

Catherine Walsh, who coordinates the New England Multifunctional Resource Center, further offers these general strategies to help students with poor literacy skills, often a problem among immigrant students:

1) Establish ungraded, self-paced classes of no more than 15 students;

2) Make individualized learning plans where teachers and students set goals that either lead to GEDs or high school diplomas;

3) Develop independent studies and community-based projects and internships as alternative ways for students to earn credit or show competency;

4) Offer classes in the native language with the same teacher for all academic subjects to maintain consistency; and

5) Start a summer program to further students' language, cognitive, and social development in a fun, less-structured setting.

Rachel Sing, in her report on successful and growing programs that serve low-schooled immigrant students, suggests grouping immigrant students with poor literacy skills with other bilingual students and using cooperative learning strategies. Cooperative learning allows students to share their knowledge and strengths.

On a more general note, schools that have met the needs of Mexican immigrant students most effectively, tend to value students' home language and culture, recognize and give immigrants' concerns priority, reach out to parents in their home language, train staff to understand and help meet immigrants' needs, and use appropriate assessments to make placement decisions.

Lack of Well-Prepared Bilingual Teachers. Both Mexican and U.S. schools suffer from a shortage of bilingual teachers and have a difficult time recruiting them. The National Association of Bilingual Education estimates that the U.S. needs at least 175,000 more certified bilingual educators for its LEP populations than are available.

Texas educator Jose Cardenas blames the dearth of bilingual teachers in the U.S. on two ill-conceived recruitment strategies. The first attempted to teach English-speaking teachers Spanish in 100 hours of Spanish instruction — a gross underestimation of the time necessary for adults to learn a second language. The second faulty approach was to import Spanish-speaking teachers who had insufficient English skills to deliver bilingual instruction. Other experts complain that some

teachers carry a bilingual certification from accredited colleges and universities but they speak only conversational Spanish. This makes preservice institutions co-culprits in the lack of well-prepared bilingual teachers.

Many teachers in Mexico are not well prepared to teach English, either. Teachers educated in Mexico's normal schools take a four-hour English course in their last semester. One notable exception to this standards is in the Centers for the Improvement and Modernization of the Teaching Profession. Forty-six of the Centers have operated nationwide for the past eight years, providing four-year degrees to students who must include at least three terms of English in their coursework.

The Future Bilingual Teachers of America and others are heralding the cultivation of "homegrown" bilingual education teachers as a way to decrease the shortage. Since the 1930's, Mexico has employed such a strategy for the education of indigenous populations who speak a number of languages not used in Mexican public schools. Mexican education officials recruited young people from indigenous villages, communities, and schools and educated them at the normal schools to teach in their native languages. These recruits already had an investment in the community in which they would teach and a familiarity with the idiosyncrasies, customs, and cultures of non-mainstream language speakers — both of which are conditions sought after by American bilingual programs.

Moreover, U.S. administrators, tired of recruiting bilingual teachers who often fail to build tenure in their new homes, began a few years ago to recruit students from their own bilingual education programs. Bilingual students apprentice as teacher aides and work part-time in bilingual education classes during summers. If they still have an interest in becoming bilingual education teachers when they graduate, school districts hire them as more permanent aides.

Credentialing

The U.S. and Mexico lack compatible accreditation systems to help school officials evaluate teacher credentials. Differences in teacher credentialing are great. To get some notion of the complexity of this issue, U.S. educators and policymakers need only look to American policies that limit teacher certification to single states. Just because a teacher is certified to teach in one state does not mean he or she can teach in another.

Such complexity is magnified between the two countries. For example, although international exchange programs typically sponsor teachers' visits to foreign universities — and many even offer a limited six-week period of instruction in another country — few, if any, exchange programs offer credentials from two universities. Nor do they guarantee that one university will accept the credits of the other. Mexican teachers often pursue an advanced degree at a U.S. border community university — even though the Mexican education officials who employ them may not recognize their hard-earned credits. U.S. students seek credentials at universities in Mexico less frequently. Dialogue between U.S. and Mexican university and education agencies on international credentialing could resolve this issue.

Curriculum Alignment and Standards

Of all the educational innovations targeted to the border, the one that most experts say needs special attention is the alignment of curricula and standards between countries and across grades. Aligning school curricula and establishing bi-national student evaluation standards, especially in the areas of mathematics and science, but also in history, geography, and area studies, would remove some of the educational disruption that takes place as students move from the U.S. to Mexican schools and vice versa.

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Although still rare, some movement toward cooperation in aligning curricula is taking place. Addendum III of the June 1993 Memorandum of Understanding of Education between Mexico and the U.S. commits both nations to inform the other country's education officials of curricula changes so that they can make education programs more coordinated and effective. In addition, even before the adoption of this agreement, some educators on both sides of the border were working quietly to coordinate their efforts.

Francisco Perea, under the auspices of one of Mexico's 11 consulates in Texas, is undertaking one curriculum alignment project. Perea has devised an "apples-to-apples" course description that aligns Texas' core curriculum with that of Mexico and several other Latin American countries.

A Visit to El Cenizo, Texas

Once inside the Juarez-Lincoln school, a U.S. school in El Cenizo, Texas, an hour's drive south of Laredo, it doesn't take long to see that the polluted water of the Rio Grande is the least of the hardships there. The city's clapboard structures — half a room on along a dirt road, an abandoned Winnebago in which a family lives across the street — belie the promise of prosperity heralded by the substantial brick entrance of the school. Even the city's name, El Cenizo, taken from the wild purple sage, seems a cruelly ironic choice. Residents of El Cenizo bought their land for a relative pittance — sometimes for as little as $100 down — but many were tricked into buying plots that had already been bought several times over. The owner of the land is being sued for that and for not supplying the residents with water, electricity, sewers, garbage disposal, or fire protection. But the people — some of whom are immigrants, others who are simply poor — must nonetheless call the ramshackle housing home for now. A Juarez-Lincoln Elementary School teacher explains that most of the *colonia* residents are carpenters, and some work at McDonald's or Jack in the Box.

The teachers at Juarez-Lincoln are mostly young and idealistic, often from San Antonio and Laredo proper. "It's horrible," a teacher fresh out of college says. "More than a dozen people living in a one-room shack that smells like urine and has flies everywhere. It's pathetic. I went to one house to donate a Christmas tree, but had to leave it outside. It would have taken up the whole space of the house, and twelve children sleep there. So we planted the tree. It's very frustrating. They come to us with all this anger, all this anger."

And where does the anger go?

"Towards each other," the teachers answer in unison. "Today I went into my classroom and all the sixth graders were crying," the youngest teacher continues. "I asked, 'What's the matter?' They told me that last night, an older sister of one of the girls in our class beat the girl with her fists, knocked her across the room several times, hit her head twice, and the little girl fainted. So she's in the hospital right now. The doctor says her heart is too weak and she might die, so all the sixth-graders are mourning. It's very difficult to teach social studies when something like this happens — it happens more often than you can imagine."

"Here at our campus we have a total of 736 students as of yesterday. Of those, 647 have only a limited English proficiency, 89 speak English fluently, 626 are on free lunch, one student is on reduced lunch, and 9 pay full price," cites the bilingual coordinator Lettie Solis. "We have 148 recent immigrants here at Juarez-Lincoln — 'recent' meaning here from zero months to two years. The majority of the children that we're picking up from Mexico have had no schooling."

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They don't know what a pencil is or that they should not tear books, the teachers tell us. They've talked about taking the children on field trips to see washers and dryers at WalMart. "We read about pillowcases, escalators, and elevators," an elementary teacher explains, and there's no way you can show these children a picture of these things and expect them to know what you're talking about. You have to take them to experience these things first-hand."

The school, which serves 2,000 students, is El Cenizo's only public service. Ms. Gutierrez, the school's full-time nurse, says that she sees 80 to 90 students a week. "On Mondays it's worst. If the kids get in an accident during the weekend on the unpaved streets, or catch a virus at home, the parents tell them to wait until Monday when they can see the school nurse. They don't have access to transportation to get to Laredo to the clinic, and most don't have Medicaid, so we're their clinic."

"She's the doctor," the principal adds.

"I refer them a lot to the health department, but many times that's very limited since they don't have Social Security or papers, two of the requirements in order for them to be seen. So they come back to us," the nurse explains.

Almost instantly, Principal Juanita Zepeda injects hope. The Department of Housing and Urban Development and Texas A&M University plan to help by building a new community center for El Cenizo. With it will come the WIC (Women, Infants, Children) program, food stamps, a clinic, and an adult and Spanish literacy program.

To gain the community's trust, Principal Zepeda and her staff donned their sneakers and walked door-to-door in the *colonia*, trying to get to know the parents. Many of the students are from central Mexican states and may not have even stopped in Nuevo Laredo across the river before entering the U.S. They have been the targets of greedy guides and immigration foes who blame them for the recession and lost jobs, and they are fearful. Others journey on, beyond the border and into big cities like Houston and Dallas, only to find themselves mired in inner city crime. So they come back to the border, buy their piece-of-a-piece of property, build a fence with scraps from dumps and trucker crates, and try to find work.

El Cenizo isn't the only *colonia* in the school district. The district built three other schools a year ago to accommodate the burgeoning growth along this part of the border. Nor is this *colonia* necessarily destined to remain impoverished. As we travel back to the manicured lawns of Laredo's "C" Section, laden with domesticated purple sage, trimmed into powder green hedges that upstage the concrete foundations of sturdy homes, an El Cenizo teacher points out, "This community used to be the *colonia* that was farthest out. Now it's closer in, its residents have found jobs, they've been able to build better housing, it's not as poor." Maybe the same will happen to El Cenizo.

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Another sign that curricula are moving closer together appears in instructional materials. In a review of new textbooks and curriculum materials recently adopted by the Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico, SEDL found them rich in integrated learning, whole language, and cooperative learning philosophies. The textbooks seemed to contradict the widely held myth among educators in the U.S. that Mexican teachers routinely encourage little more than rote memorization from text that have been pre-ordained by the central government in Mexico.

Getting international institutions to agree to standards for evaluating students from different countries is similarly difficult. For years, educators on both sides of the border have talked about streamlining the international flow of student records across borders by establishing portable report cards that would travel with students. The report cards would contain information about students' knowledge and abilities so that their new teachers could provide them with similar academic content in similar chronologies. Students and their families who crisscross the border would not, as a matter of course, fall behind or have to undergo extensive reevaluation each time they crossed the border.

Some lessons on international standards can be gleaned from the International Baccalaureate, offered through an office in Geneva, Switzerland, to high schools in 75 countries worldwide. A number of universities, including Harvard University, recognize the International Baccalaureate.

To receive an International Baccalaureate, students must: (1) pass courses in world literature in their native language or the language they know best; (2) achieve fluency in a second language; (3) complete classes with an international bent in history, geography, economics, philosophy, psychology, social anthropology, organization, and management; (4) complete classes in experimental sciences such as biology, chemistry, physics, and environmental systems; (5) complete coursework in mathematics theory and practice; (6) take electives in art, computers, the theory of knowledge, and a third modern language or culture; (7) submit a 4,000-word final essay; (8) volunteer 150 hours to charitable, educational, or arts organizations; and (9) pass a battery of multiple-day tests that are graded by educators in other countries. Organizers of this international diploma may provide educators, administrators, and policymakers tips on aligning elementary/*primaria* and middle and high school/*secundaria* curricula.

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However, curriculum alignment is sure to be a slow process. And not only does it involve elementary and secondary education, teacher preparation programs must be aligned as well. The experience of Ramon Alaniz, who directs an alternative teacher certification program at Texas A&M University, may be enlightening. "Right now we have two programs in cooperation with Tamaulipas (Mexico), including a Master's level of international bilingual education. But we ran into curriculum alignment right away," he explains. "The program required some form of curriculum alignment because we had to equate the Mexican professional degree — the *licentura* — to a B.A. One of the problems that we have is meaningful communication with our Mexican counterparts. Frankly, we do not speak the same language when it comes to talking about different systems in education. While I may be fluent in the native language of Mexico, we have systems that are totally different. It really doesn't matter that you understand the language in the context of the citizen; we don't understand the professional differences. And that's the understanding we need to collaborate on in education.

"Frankly, we do not speak the same language when it comes to talking about different systems in education."

"It takes people and lots of time to actually align curriculum," Alaniz maintains.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications and distance education programs hold enormous potential to advance learning and cultural understanding in both the U.S. and Mexico. Interactive, two-way classrooms could move schools along the border closer to a two-way bilingual ideal and promote higher order learning and real-life instruction while simultaneously advancing technological collaboration between the two countries.

New U.S. federal legislation requires all TV sets sold in the U.S. after 1995 to have built-in decoding circuitry for closed caption broadcasting. Though initially designed to afford access to programming for people with hearing impairments, the decoding technology also helps teach language skills through television.

A bi-national committee co-chaired by Sharon Robinson, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and Pedro Sabau Garcia of the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education is exploring such distance learning/bi-national collaborations. So far, the countries have pledged to share knowledge and educational materials on educational technology, conduct a teleconference on distance learning and rural

education, explore the use of technology to promote adult literacy, and identify research questions for study. The two nations could similarly collaborate on establishing clearinghouses and databases.

Cultural Understanding and Exchange

Cultural understanding and exchange programs for students, teachers, and school administrators in the U.S. and Mexico are essential to promote awareness and understanding. Permanent structures need to be created for collaboration, such as a commission on teacher and student exchanges, as well as mechanisms for sharing information on educational topics and needs. According to Alaniz, "Teachers need to know what their colleagues are doing if they are to be able to effectively educate children and families."

However, cultural exchanges must provide teachers with more than simple changes of place to be effective. According to Alaniz, "Too many pre-K through 12th-grade teacher programs offer participants little more than cultural tourism." Observing poorly designed teacher exchange and training efforts, one Mexican educator went so far as to call it "cruel" to place an American in a Mexican classroom without schooling the teacher on the systemic and philosophical differences between U.S. and Mexican education.

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Teachers in U.S. border schools like Juarez-Lincoln Elementary in El Cenizo, Texas, say exchange programs would help them deal with low student experience levels and the effects that poverty has had on their Mexican students. They see benefits to their participating in training and staff development programs that prepare Mexican teachers for these situations.

Health and Social Services

Given Mexico's 50 percent poverty rate and increasingly high air and water pollution levels from the development of heavy industry along the border, children growing up along the border have a tremendous need for health care. American social service providers have generally been slow to address their health and nutritional needs.

While many feel that schools need to take a more active role in meeting students basic human needs, school-based clinics and social services are forming slowly and only in some areas. Border educators still decry the lack of a medical training facility, which would help alleviate some of the problem.

Researcher Virginia Fowkes and her colleagues identified some barriers to the development of comprehensive health education and service programs: (1) differing school and community priorities; (2) cultural differences between school faculty and the community; (3) physician and dentist fear of competition; and (4) health care delivery systems that were too sparse and few to support education in isolated and underserved areas.

Educators, health professionals, and social service providers along the border and throughout the United States and Mexico need to invest the time and energy to form partnerships, to collaborate, and to build strong health and social services systems. Jack Stoops and Janis Hull of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory identify three elements essential to successful integration of social and health services in the U.S.: (1) a person to lead the coordination effort; (2) a central facility to house the services; and (3) a governance structure to facilitate the efforts. Although focused on rural areas, their findings may apply to other areas as well.

Current Efforts, Obstacles, Progress

"Cultures are produced by a clash of cultures — even as Mexico is a mixture of Spanish and Indian — and he (Fuentes) sees the United States heading for such a clash: 'The opposites do not annul each other but rather tend to fuse each other.'"

— Carlos Fuentes in Anthony Day's "The Transopolitan Novelist"

NAFTA removed barriers to trade. However, despite an ambitious agenda, no organization has yet assumed responsibility for coordinating the educational changes that this new economic climate implies. Governments, educational institutions, and businesses will need to share responsibilities and resources and demonstrate rigorous leadership in order to support the learning needs of residents along the border — both children and adults. What new systems or infrastructures need to be created, and which existing programs, organizations, and institutions can be built upon? How can information about regional work be shared? How can the barriers to collaboration be overcome to benefit all the countries involved, individually and collectively?

Federal Policies and Actions

While the U.S. Department of Education has no official policy on NAFTA, it is working to ease the transition of students who cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Immigrant students and their families have a variety of services available to them. A partial listing includes, the Emergency Immigrant Education Program, Section 204 of the Immigrant Reform and Control Act, the Transitional Program for Refugee Children, bilingual education programs, Title 1 Programs, Head Start programs, special education, and free and reduced lunch plans. The U.S. Department of Education also has indicated an interest in upgrading the level of teacher exchanges and in joint teacher training activities.

Yet funding for the research, development, and implementation of new programs and structures remains problematic. NAFTA does not make any provisions to bring

people together to discuss education, and federal law prohibits the U.S. Department of Education from using money for international work. For example, the U.S. Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs has no new funds for the previously mentioned bilingual collaboration. However, the department is proposing that Congress allow it to use some of the $10 billion that it appropriated for international activities. Many border educators and policymakers feel that both the Mexican and U.S. governments need to review their policies and regulations with the goal of providing more local autonomous flexibility for the border region. One of their recommendations is to allow border states in both countries to work directly with each other without having to rely on contacts at the federal level.

Nongovernmental sources of funding hold potential as well. According to the Mexican Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C., one source of "nongovernmental money" is contributions by U.S. citizens or corporations to Mexican scientific, literary, or educational organizations. According to a recent treaty between Mexico and the U.S., such contributions are tax deductible, just as if they were made to a U.S. charity. A donation from a Mexican company to an education or charitable institution in the U.S. is similarly tax deductible under Mexican law.

State Government

For the past 11 years, the Border Governors' Conference has brought together governors of U.S. and Mexican border states to discuss issues of state and federal importance. For the past two years, the group has issued resolutions on ways to alleviate the difficulties posed by immigration, economic woes, and language and cultural diversity. However, follow up and implementation have thus far have been limited, inconsistent, and relatively ineffective. Privately, some participants claim barriers persist on two levels:

1) Mexican border educators bring problems to the table in hopes of devising bilateral solutions, but U.S. officials bring strategies that have worked successfully in the U.S. but may not be easily exportable to Mexico; and

2) U.S. educators only gain superficial notions of Mexican problems and too little substantive knowledge of the Mexican educational system.

A set of position papers from the first joint meeting of the Texas and New Mexico State Boards of Education outlined a five-level plan to improve education in New Mexico and Texas for both Mexican immigrant students and for those native to the

states. These documents advocate establishing "official ties with the education agencies of the border states of Mexico [in order to] pursue activities that will benefit the children we have in our classrooms today." Using bilingual, multicultural instruction as an umbrella, the Boards endorsed the development of:

- bi-national school programs that lead to a diploma recognized by states in the U.S. and Mexico;
- a teacher exchange program between Mexico's border states and New Mexico that leads to dual licensure for teaching core elements in bi-national schools; and
- a bi-national administrative collaborative to "enhance understanding" and establish bi-national task forces between education, health, and social service agencies along the U.S./Mexico border.

These and other conferences produced a body of progressive thought and policy suggestions.

Higher Education and Business

At the higher education level, work has begun with a Trilateral Commission set up by Canada, the U.S., and Mexico to bridge domestic and international education. Stakeholders — educators, business people, government officials, and others from the public and private sector — are discussing new policies and programs. Much of the discussion focuses on the needs of local industry and expanding opportunities for technical training and post-secondary education.

The Center for Quality Assurance in International Education, the *Universidad de Guadalajara*, and the *Secretaría de Educacion Publica* — the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education — held a conference in Cancun in May of 1994 on the increasing globalization of the professions. Accreditation, certification and licensure make it difficult even for U.S. citizens to cross state lines to work, and it is that much more difficult for foreign national professionals to cross country borders. But a growing global awareness among the professions has identified ways to streamline these requirements while still preserving quality assurances through: (1) international accreditation; (2) international program recognition; (3) international consultation; (4) free-trade agreements; (5) international reciprocity agreements; (6) international licensure of occupations; and (7) international credential review. Many professions

are already participating in one or more of these activities. The conference also paid special attention to the development and compatibility of educational standards and accreditation in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Canada is also spearheading a movement to create a 360-million person-strong regional educational environment where new structures will encourage the free exchange of ideas; where students and professors will have better mobility among universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico; and where credits are comparable and transferable so that students can take courses in any of the three countries and count them toward a degree.

Two years ago, the bi-nationally funded Education Exchange Commission anticipated raising $100 million to finance educational exchange programs and research between the U.S. and Mexico. At the time, the Commission's $3.4 million budget already financed 305 educational exchanges between the U.S. and Mexico — 250 of which involved Mexicans studying in the U.S. The *Colegio de la Frontera* in Tijuana has brought together a consortium of universities in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada through which qualified students from any of the three countries can pursue advanced academic credentialing in international business. "The program prepares them for the kind of internationally competent work that lies ahead after NAFTA," explained college president Bustamante. "Our students can act as liaisons for corporate clients or in their own interests as international business people."

"The [Colegio de la Frontera] prepares [students] for the kind of internationally competent work that lies ahead after NAFTA."

In April of 1994, the Latino Educators Committee on Free Trade and Education (LECFTE) met in Tucson, Arizona, to condense their prescriptions for educational policy in light of NAFTA. Like the Border Governors' Conference, LECFTE proposed establishing a "Tri-lateral North American Education Commission of educators, citizens, and government officials ... to harmonize the curriculum, standards, assessment, technology, professional development ... to achieve a comparative understanding of educational systems of each country." It should be noted, however, that the LECFTE focused on post-secondary educational attainment, adult literacy, and technological and vocational venues and did not address pre-K through 12 issues.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Through its Border Colloquy Project, SEDL is working with representatives from both sides of the border to develop a bi-national educational agenda. Since its inception in March 1994, the project's purpose has been threefold:

- To develop a shared understanding about the educational issues and needs facing *La Frontera* as it experiences massive cultural and economic change;
- To foster a bi-nationally shared vision for the education and well-being of the region's children and youth; and
- To encourage the development and use of comprehensive, bi-national plans to fulfill that vision.

During the project's initial phase, SEDL staff convened a series of six regional meetings with representatives from states on both sides of the border. Representatives included state education agency staff, school administrators and practitioners, higher education staff, business and civic leaders, immigration officials, health and human services providers, government officials, and church leaders.

Participants were asked to imagine what education along the border should look like by the year 2010, when NAFTA is fully implemented. They then outlined steps that should be taken to achieve their vision.

In August 1994, SEDL brought 35 of the meeting participants together in Austin, TX, to develop an action plan incorporating ideas from each of the six previous meetings. Among the group's recommendations were to:

- Conduct a comparative study of the educational programs of U.S. and Mexican elementary and secondary public schools;
- Create a task force or similar group whereby systemic, comprehensive planning can be carried out;
- Maintain and expand the bi-national network of education, business, and community leaders established through the Border Colloquy Project so that members can continue to plan efforts at the community level;

- Develop and implement bi-national cross-border activities — such as teacher exchanges and joint teacher training programs — to expand and improve biculturalism and bilingualism throughout the region; and

- Establish a clearinghouse for information on border issues that includes a database of promising programs and practices on both sides of the border.

During the project's second phase, SEDL staff are continuing discussions with members of two planning groups that were established at the Austin meeting. In addition, the laboratory is providing staff and services to assist in the implementation of elements of the action plan as well as facilitating communications through electronic means and a bi-monthy, bi-lingual newsletter.

Conclusion

Education along the border and beyond is an issue that has become more pressing with the passage of NAFTA and increasing immigration. The area most affected for now is the border, but border issues will eventually affect much of both countries. A basic understanding of the Mexican education system, the backgrounds and strengths of Mexican teachers, the needs of Mexican students, and possible programs can go a long way. Fortunately, research and wisdom from practice are beginning to provide ideas of how to do so. Some areas that need consideration include two-way bilingualism, teacher training and exchange, curriculum alignment, credentialing, health and social services, and technology in education.

There are strengths in both countries. It is incumbent upon us to draw from the best of the two.